

A WEEKLY INFORMATION DIGEST

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On other pages

Reformed Churchmen See Government		Bishop of Chichester Speaks on	
On North Africa.....	2	Resistance Movement.....	3
Church Opinion Strongly against		Seven Christian Groups Join in Geneva	
Weapons of Mass Destruction.....	3	Campaign.....	4

GERMANY

Berlin Synod Stands behind Dibelius

(Berlin) - Dr. Otto Dibelius, Bishop of Berlin, continues to be attacked for his alleged collusion with the Bonn government and for "blessing their arms" (see EPS No. 15/16). In reply to the criticisms the Synod of the Evangelical Church in East and West Berlin and of the Province of Brandenburg has declared:

"During the past few weeks immoderate and unjustified attacks have been made on the Evangelical Bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg. These attacks have not hesitated to attack us Christians on a point which is sacred to us. The synod protests against the attacks. It refuses to dissociate itself from the bishop whom it has appointed as the leader of its church. The synod expects the state authorities to reject attacks of this kind against bishop and church, and to render them impossible in future, in order to leave open the possibility of reasonable discussions between state and Church. This would be in accordance with the government's own repeated wish. The synod also considers it intolerable that its bishop should be prevented from exercising his office in a large area of his diocese. It urgently requests the government of the German Democratic Republic to remove such obstacles."

The synod also supported the statement made by the deans of theological faculties in the German Democratic Republic, in which they thanked atomic scientists in Western and Eastern Germany for warning against arming the German forces with atomic weapons and against the continuance of atom-bomb experiments (see EPS No. 17). "We fully agree with the Synod of the EKD and with the ecumenical community in radically rejecting all weapons of mass destruction," said the Berlin Synod.

The synod urged the municipal authorities of East Berlin to remove restrictions on religious instruction in schools in East Berlin, and to withdraw a statute passed in February 1956 concerning "the maintenance of order and continuity in education," insofar as it hindered Christian instruction and even prohibited it altogether in secondary schools.

The synod heard reports on the increasing difficulties of the Church in the DDR. Financial problems arise from prohibitions on levying church taxes and collecting unrestrictedly for church work. Contributions from the state have been cut by 40%. It is also becoming difficult to train the required number of theological students, because there are not enough secondary schools giving adequate elementary instruction in ancient languages. The lack of catechists has become critical. Many pulpits are empty because pastors have emigrated to Western Germany or to other countries. The authorities refuse to grant permits for young pastors from Western Germany to work in the East (see EPS No. 19). Pressure is being brought to bear on parents and children to persuade them to be party to the secular "Youth Dedication". The Church can no longer confirm children who have accepted this "dedication" ceremony.

The synod condemned as abominable recent desecration of Jewish cemeteries and graves in Western Germany, and requested the Council of the EKD to address a warning to Protestants "against the revival of anti-semitic nationalism... whose impenitence would incur the judgment of God."

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The Press and Information Service of the East German Democratic Republic confiscated

the Protestant weekly, "Potsdamer Kirche" of May 19, because it published the synod's unanimous vote of confidence in Bishop Dibelius.

E.P.S., Geneva

FRANCE

Reformed Churchmen See Government on North Africa

M. Gaston Defferre, French Minister for Overseas Territories, has granted an interview to the representatives of the French Reformed Church, to hear the views of the Church on the North African crisis.

M. Defferre, a Protestant, who has been actively involved in drafting the new basis for regulating relationships between France and her overseas territories, is deputy mayor of Marseilles, and received the deputation during the fiftieth national synod of the Reformed Church.

Pastor Marc Boegner, who led the church group, had underlined, in meetings of the synod, the duties of the Church in the present and the future. He said the Church would have to play its part in coping with the present exodus of European population from Algeria, which has "material and psychological causes." Pastor Boegner said the exodus had already affected between 25% and 30% of the European population as it was in 1955 and the trend would undoubtedly be further accentuated.

The future, according to M. Boegner, involves the commitment of "men who accept, with all the difficulties that can be foreseen, the task of participating loyally in technical aid." He said that such workers will be able to see their task as an opportunity for significant and influential identification with others, and that the future would also be affected by the intention of the World Council of Churches to follow the situation closely and facilitate new initiatives of Christian aid and participation within the present state of affairs in Tunisia. According to M. Boegner, the future also involves adaptation of the structure of church life to the Church's new conditions of life in an independent country.

E.P.S., Geneva

HUNGARY

Latest News from the Churches

The "Hungarian Church Press" has resumed publication under the editorship of a group of Reformed, Lutheran and Free Church leaders. The free churches are represented on the panel by Pastor Laszlo Szabo, national president of the Baptist Churches. The theological periodical of the Lutheran Church, "Lelkipazstor", has also appeared under the editorship of Pastor Imre Veoreos, recently-appointed principal of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Budapest.

The superintendent of the Methodist Church, Janos Szecey, has resigned at the end of his term for health reasons. Pastor Adam Hecker has been nominated to succeed him.

Plans are in hand to move the Baptist theological seminary to larger accommodation and to renew publication of the Baptist periodical.

The Protestant churches broadcast services in turn on Sunday mornings through the Budapest "Petöfi" station.

The Reformed Church has 109 theological students in training, including thirty-nine new students.

Paper supplied with the help of the World Council of Churches' Division of Inter-Church Aid will be used to publish 100,000 Bibles and 200,000 copies of the new Reformed hymn book.

The almanac, published by the Reformed Church for 1957, includes a record of the meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at Galyatető, Hungary, in August 1956.

According to Western press reports and the Hungarian paper "Keletmagyarorszag", Pastor Istvan Ban, of the Hungarian Reformed congregation at Niyireghaza, has been condemned to five years' imprisonment for being involved in the October revolution last year and other pastors have recently been brought before the police for examination.

E.P.S., Geneva

AFRICACatholics Attack Racial Bill

(Cape Town) - Two Roman Catholic Archbishops have denounced the country's racial segregation laws and particularly the Native Laws Amendment Bill.

Archbishop Owen McCann said, "The South African government is putting the things of Caesar before the things of God. The Church was told by Christ to go and teach all nations. God's claim on us comes first. We only obey the state because it derives its authority from God."

Earlier, Roman Archbishop Denis E. Hurley of Durban assailed racial segregation laws threatening the country with "disaster." "It is incredible that rational human beings could plan a celestial future for white herrenvolk in South Africa through their racial laws," he said. "May God grant that we may have the decency to recoil from them."

The controversial Native Laws Amendment Bill has passed the House of Assembly. Before becoming law it must be passed by the Senate.

E.P.S., Geneva

GERMANYChurch Opinion Strongly against Weapons of Mass Destruction

Vigorous discussion of the use of atomic weapons continues in the churches of Germany. (See EPS No. 17.) Further pronouncements have been issued by the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland, the Methodist Church in South-west Germany, the Evangelical Church of Anhalt (DDR), the Church of Berlin-Brandenburg, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Oldenburg and church leaders in Hessen-Nassau and Westphalia. Congregations of the Evangelical Church of the Union (EKU) have been called to pray in Sunday worship that atomic energy may prove a blessing, not a curse, for mankind.

Moritz Mitzenheim, Bishop of Thuringia, has emphasized in a series of pre-Whitsun meditations, that "the Church speaks to all men," condemns atom bomb experiments, wherever planned and carried out, and condemns any threat to use atomic weapons. The Church's word carries weight, in the Bishop's view, because it is independent of political propaganda. The Church, he said, protests against all misuse of power.

In an address on Christians in the Atomic Age, Dr. Helmuth Thielicke, the well-known Protestant theologian, told the Hamburg party conference of the Christian Democratic Union that there was a "vicious circle of compulsion" making man a mere tool in the hands of modern technical progress. He rejected the suggestion that there could be "just wars" of defense any longer. He said that in the atomic age war must be rejected altogether - even war of defense.

E.P.S., Geneva

GERMANYBishop of Chichester Speaks on Resistance Movement

In lectures at Gottingen and Bonn, on May 14 and 15, the Bishop of Chichester traced the course of war-time events involving German churchmen and the resistance movement.

After describing conversations he had had with German pastors, and his correspondence with Sir Anthony Eden, the Bishop, the Rt. Rev. G.K.A. Bell, told his audience, "The principal point which I want to argue is this. The driving force behind the resistance movement was a moral force... Its leaders were men of high ideals, to whom Hitler and all his works were an abomination... It is no wonder, surely, that members of the Christian Church in Germany, both Protestants and Catholics, should be prominent in it. Nor should it be surprising that churchmen outside Germany who knew something of the conflict within that country should give it public support, even in time of war."

"The real hope for the future of Europe," the bishop continued, "and of the whole world of nations, is that statesmen of every nation should show the same brave and disinterested loyalty to truth, justice and freedom, in national and international affairs that the finest spirits of the resistance movement in Germany showed during the second World War."

While in Germany, Bishop Bell, an honorary president of the World Council of Churches, was received by Professor Theodor Heuss, president of the German Federal Republic. He also met with Konrad Adenauer, chancellor of the Federal Republic, Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier, president of the Bundestag, and a number of federal ministers.

E.P.S., Geneva

SWITZERLANDSeven Christian Groups Join in Geneva Campaign

In a campaign of evangelism conducted nightly from May 19 to June 7, seven Christian communities in the city of Geneva are supporting an attempt to reach outsiders by presenting the Christian message on neutral ground. In a large tent erected on a central common, two evangelists, Pastor Maurice Ray and Mr. Thomas Roberts, are dealing with non-religious subjects that are chosen to draw the man in the street to the Gospel. Nightly lectures are grouped under the general theme "Christ's Rule - the Hope of Men". Mr. Ray is a well-known "problem post bag" over Radio-Lausanne. Thomas Roberts is a Paris evangelist.

Training sessions for the campaign have prepared teams of "counsellors" to guide those who make decisions into the local churches and groups cooperating in the campaign. The meetings form part of a succession of similar efforts commenced and inspired by Billy Graham's visit to Geneva in 1955. The Geneva Graham campaigns were organized by the same Committee for Common Evangelistic Action".

The participating groups are the National Protestant Church of Geneva (Reformed), the Free Church - a local "Assembly" without outside church affiliation, the "Evangelical Revival Church", the Swiss German Evangelical Church, the Salvation Army and the Methodists. In a statement made as the campaign began, Maurice Ray declared that, in spite of differences in doctrine, the groups had "really discovered the Church of Jesus Christ in evangelism undertaken together."

E.P.S., Geneva

Churches Rush Aid for Earthquake Victims in Turkey

Geneva) - Aid has been rushed to victims of the recent earthquakes in southwest Turkey as a result of a request cabled by the WCC's Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees in churches in eleven countries.

Seven-hundred blankets, bought with money sent by the British Council of Churches and the churches in Denmark, were shipped by air from Geneva. Church World Service, the relief branch of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., shipped 10,000 pounds of clothing, 2,000 blankets, 100 tents and first-aid equipment. Fifteen-hundred dollars from CWS is being used to supply needed medicines. Australian churches have sent £200.

E.P.S., Geneva

THAILANDYMCA Leadership Training Course

A special five-week YMCA Leadership Training Institute has just ended in Bangkok. The YMCA movements in Burma, Malaya and Thailand have cooperated in the first inter-movement course of this kind in Asia. The purpose was to train young men for part-time or full-time leadership in the YMCA. This training project is a direct outgrowth of plans formulated at the Fourth Asian YMCA Leaders Conference held in Hong Kong in December, 1956.

Eighteen young men from five countries were enrolled in the Bangkok Institute. The program included Bible study, lectures and discussions as well as a limited amount of practical work in the city of Bangkok. Serving as dean of the Institute was the Rev. J. H. Dunderdale, director of the YMCA Institute in Bangalore, India.

E.P.S., Geneva

Scriptures Published in 1,108 Languages

At least one book of the Bible has now been published in 1,108 languages, according to the United Bible Societies. The complete Bible has been published in 210 languages, New Testaments in 270 more and a Gospel or other whole book in 628.

During 1956 the complete Bible was published for the first time in three languages - Bemba (Northern Rhodesia), Nimbi Ijo (Nigeria) and Marovo (Solomon Islands). In the same period all of the New Testament was published in Aranda (Australia), Kuskokwim (Alaska), Manus Island (Admiralty Islands, New Guinea), Mende (Sierra Leone), Nantcheri (French West Africa), Navaho (United States), Saua (New Guinea) and Tzeltal (Mexico). In addition, Scriptures, usually one of the Gospels, were published for the first time in sixteen other languages.

E.P.S., Geneva

SWITZERLANDProtestant Youth Associations Publish Joint Monthly

The May issue of "Contact", a new monthly for young Swiss Christians, has just appeared. It is edited by Dr. Hans Heinrich Brunner, student chaplain at Zurich and published under the joint auspices of the YMCA, the YWCA, the Youth Association of the Swiss Methodist Church, the Youth Association of the Evangelical Church, the Girls' Bible Association in Switzerland, the Youth Work of the Swiss League of Protestant Workers and Employees, and the "Young Church" (the largest Protestant youth association in Switzerland), which have stopped publishing their own papers for young people. "Contact" describes this decision as "an important step in promoting a living, practical ecumenical spirit among young Protestants in Switzerland." The World's Student Christian Federation, the Association of Protestant Boy Scouts, the Youth Association of the Baptist Church and other youth groups have also expressed their interest in this new joint enterprise. E.P.S., Geneva

SWITZERLANDPresbyterians Raise \$140,000 to Restore Calvin Auditorium

A \$140,000 fund has been contributed by Christians from every continent to restore the historic Calvin Auditorium in Geneva, Switzerland, as a world Presbyterian and Reformed center.

The Calvin Auditorium, erected in the fourteenth century, is the church where John Calvin, John Knox and Theodore Beza, Protestant reformers, taught and preached. The restored center will have a chapel for an English-speaking congregation and house "memorials of the world-wide Reformed faith."

Dr. Harrison Ray Anderson of Chicago, Illinois, chaired the restoration fund committee named by the General Council of the World Presbyterian Alliance three years ago. He announced that the fund had reached its goal at a meeting of the North American Area Council of the Alliance in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and urged the council to raise an additional \$25,000 to furnish the chapel in the auditorium! E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED STATESFamily Life Experts Join IMC

(New York, N.Y.) - Dr. and Mrs. David R. Mace have been appointed field consultants of the International Missionary Council in the Council's Christian Home and Family Life Emphasis. They participated in the IMC Caribbean Consultation at San German, Puerto Rico, May 17-24.

The Maces will travel widely in Asia and in Africa. Dr. Irma Highbaugh, a Methodist missionary loaned to the IMC since January, 1950, has been working as field representative in home and family life. She returns to the U.S. to retire.

Dr. Mace, born in Scotland, is the son of a Methodist minister. He has served in England as pastor, as college chaplain, and as superintendent of the community center, Archway Central Hall, in North London. One of the founders of the Marriage Guidance Council in England, Dr. Mace served seven years as the Council's General Secretary. Since 1947, he has been a member of the faculty of Drew University, Madison, N.J. Mrs. Mace, also a marriage guidance expert, has worked closely with her husband. E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED STATESNCC Names Family Life Head

(New York, N.Y.) - The Rev. William H. Genne of the Clara Elizabeth Fund for Maternal Health, Flint, Mich., has been named to direct the Family Life Department of the National Council of Churches.

Problems with which the National Council's Family Life program is concerned include delinquency of children, mental illness, old age and care of the aged, racial, religious and class prejudice, marriage and divorce, and responsible citizenship.

Mr. Genne has conducted a counselling service and taught "Marriage and the Family" at Flint Junior College. He also conducts a marriage forum for engaged and newly married couples. E.P.S., Geneva

